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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/961,375	09/25/2001	Tsunayuki Owa	214182US6	5959
22850	7590	07/06/2007		
OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND, MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314			EXAMINER CHAMPAGNE, LUNA	
			ART UNIT 3627	PAPER NUMBER
			NOTIFICATION DATE 07/06/2007	DELIVERY MODE ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary	Application No: 09/961,375	Applicant(s) OWA, TSUNAYUKI	
	Examiner Luna Champagne	Art Unit 3627	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 March 2007.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1 and 3-37 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 9-24 and 27-30 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-8, 25,26,31-37 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

The amendment filed on 3/28/07 is acknowledged. Claims 1, 3-8, 25, 26, 31-37 are presented for examination. Claim 2 is cancelled. Claims 9-24, 27-30 are withdrawn. Claims 32-37 are new.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 7, 8, 25, 31-33, 36, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over De Groot (6,421,047 B1) in view of Boyd (60/185,902) ^{Provisional} (2005/0004983).

Re claims 1, 25, 31, 32, De Groot discloses community service offering apparatus (10) for exchanging information with a plurality of user terminals connected by a network, the apparatus comprising virtual space information storing means for storing advance information about a plurality of virtual spaces (see col. 3 space modules read as the storage means); host means col. 5 lines 29-32 is read as the virtual space offering means for allowing a user to select any one of said virtual spaces and for offering the selected virtual space as a user-specific virtual space owned by said

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user regarded as a first user; displaying means for displaying said user-specific virtual space (see e.g. col. 3, lines 44-46).

De Groot is silent regarding a virtual space information specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces to be offered for selection; a charge controlling means for charging said first user of the plurality of users a fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space, wherein said fee is based on the specified type of said user-specific virtual space and only said first user of the plurality of users is charged to own or lease said user-specific virtual space and the remaining plurality of users may access the virtual space without charge.

However, Boyd discloses a virtual space information specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces (*web page, bulletin board*) to be offered for selection (see e.g. page 12, lines 1-3); a charge controlling means for charging said first user (*member/subscriber of the service*) of the plurality of users a fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space (*a fee may be charged for each invitation posted*), wherein said fee is based on the specified type of said user-specific virtual space and only said first user of the plurality of users is charged to own or lease said user-specific virtual space and the remaining plurality of users may access the virtual space without charge. Boyd discloses "A fee may be charged for each invitation posted (*to the subscriber*), and/or each invitation accepted". It is understood that if a fee is charged to the subscriber, based on the operator "or" used in the sentence, it may not be charged to the other users accepting the invitation. Therefore this disclosure reads ^{on} ~~into~~ Applicant's limitations.

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Therefore it would have been obvious, at the time of the invention to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify De Groot and include the steps of the virtual space selection feature and a charge controlling means for charging said first user of the plurality of users a fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space, as taught in Boyd, in order to offer a choice of space, encourage guest users and promote interaction.

Re claims 7 and 8, De Groot, discloses a space slave module, which creates objects in the space answering managing objects, which inherently must be displayed. Since the slave module can only be operated by a person who owns the server, this answers the limitation of only privileged users managing the objects (*see, e.g. col. 3, lines 36-41*).

Re claims 33 and 36, De Groot does not specifically disclose a community service offering apparatus wherein the fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space in the virtual world is a monthly fee.

However, Boyd discloses a community service offering apparatus wherein the fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space in the virtual world is a monthly fee (*see e.g. page 36, lines 1-3*).

Therefore, it would have been obvious, at the time of the invention, to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify De Groot, and include the step wherein the fee to own

or lease said user-specific virtual space in the virtual world is a monthly fee, as taught by Boyd, in order to establish a predetermined billing cycle.

Claims 3-6, 26, 34, 35, 37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over De Groot (6,421,047 B1), in view of Boyd (60/185,902), in further view of Leahy et al. (6,219,045 B1).

De Groot, in view of Boyd, lacks the specific details of the claims. However, Leahy et al. disclose the features as follow:

Re claims 3, 4, 5, 26, 34, 35 and 37, Leahy et al. disclose that each room has a given maximum number of avatars (*see e.g., col. 13, lines 21-26*).

Since each room has a given maximum number of avatars (objects), the limitations on the virtual space fee based on number of users, objects, types of objects, amount of data constituting a real storage area, specified type of said user-specific virtual space, and the amount of virtual space owned or leased by said purchasing/first user in the virtual world are deemed an obvious variant of Leahy et al. which monitor popularity in conjunction with billing to bill higher at the most popular spaces.

Re claim 6: Leahy et al. disclose using a user ID to gain access to a virtual room and hence is an access managing means for managing access to said user-specific virtual space (*see e.g. col. 5, lines 62-63*).

It would have been obvious, at the time of the invention, to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify De Groot, in view of Boyd, and include an access managing

means, as taught by Leahy et al., in order to control network traffic and be compensated for use of the virtual space.

Reply to Arguments:

Applicant's remarks with respect to claims 1, 3-8, 25, 26 and 31 have been considered and are addressed in the rejection above.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Luna Champagne whose telephone number is (571) 272-7177. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 8:30 - 5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Florian Zeender can be reached on (571) 272-6790. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Luna Champagne
Examiner
Art Unit 3627

June 21, 2007

 6/21/07
F. RYAN ZEENDER
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER